

Father O'Connor's Homily for 25 July 2021
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time-B

2 Kings 4: 42-44

Ephesians 4: 1-6

John 6: 1-15

Two students were having an argument about which internet search engine was the best. One of them said, "I really don't like that one because every time I use it I get stuff that I don't really need." The other replied, "That's exactly why I like it: because sometimes the stuff that I really need is not the stuff that I'm looking for."

All the information that can come to us through the internet is very plentiful. And it gives us a small glimpse of how God knows infinitely more, how awesome God is, and how **bounteous** God is with His blessings.

Bounty. That's a word that you and I say three times a day with grace before meals, don't we: "Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy **bounty**, through Christ our Lord. Amen." Bounty means the extravagant blessings of God.

In today's Gospel we see Jesus being bountiful, extravagant with His blessings. Five thousand men are there at that mountain, and Jesus knows what He is going to do, but He first tests His apostles. He asks, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" And Philip answers, "Lord, two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little."

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, says, "Jesus, there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what good are these for so many?" Then Jesus says, "Have the people recline." He wants them to sit down on the grass. Then He takes the bread and the fish, blesses them and tells His apostles to distribute them. And there is plenty for everybody. In fact there are twelve baskets of leftovers! We see the bounty of Jesus: how extravagant He is with His blessings!

Notice that Jesus had the people sit down on the grass first. Why? For the very same reason that you and I are here today: to take the time to sit down and reflect on God's blessings and to be grateful for them – and to prepare for those still to come.

The people in the Gospel received something they hadn't asked for. They came looking for more cures for the sick. But Jesus gave them

something else: bread and fish multiplied so they could all be filled. All of this was in view of His gift of Himself to us in the Eucharist – His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity – so that we can be nourished and strengthened bountifully in Him, with plenty for everyone.

Sometimes the stuff that we really need is not the stuff that we are looking for.

A lady in a small town was going to be evicted from her home. Some of the neighbors put some money together so she could pay the rent. One of them went to her home and knocked and knocked on her door but there was no answer.

Come to find out, she was inside that house all along, but she wouldn't answer the door because she thought it was the landlord coming to evict her. And God's answer to her prayers was right there on her front porch.

Sometimes the stuff that we really need is not the stuff that we are looking for. But the Lord knows what we need. As He has blessed us bountifully in the past, He is going to continue to bless us bountifully in the future as He knows best.

Some children were asked to describe what “bountiful” meant to them. “Bountiful is an extra bowl of ice cream, and getting to stay up late, and laughing a lot,” said Alison, age 7. “Bountiful means I have as many books as I want to read, and lots of warm clothes for the wintertime,” said Emily, age 9. And Brian, age 10, said, “Bountiful means we have everything we need, even though we don't have everything we want just yet. It makes me feel safe.” I especially like Brian's response.

We all need to take some time regularly to sit down somewhere and reflect on the Lord's blessings to us – the ones we asked for and the ones that came as a complete surprise. As we sang in today's Responsorial Psalm: “The hand of the Lord feeds us. He answers all our needs” [Psalm 145].

As we pray our grace at our tables, let us not be in a one-breath hurry with our thanks: “Bless us, Lord ...gifts ... bounty ... Amen. Pass the gravy please.”

Not like that, but with hearts grateful for the Lord's bountiful, oftentimes surprising blessings received, and awaiting those still to come: “Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy *bounty*, through Christ our Lord. Amen.”